

NEWS – CONGRESSMAN PETE STARK

239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-5065
www.stark.house.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, May 26, 2011
Contact: Sarah Baldauf (Stark) – (202) 225-3202
Nathan Landers (Napolitano) – (202) 225-5256

Mental Health Caucus Hosts Mental Health First Aid Workshop

□ WASHINGTON – Today, as part of National May Mental Health Awareness Month, Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Health on the Committee of Ways and Means and member of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, and Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Co-Chair of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, hosted a “Mental Health First-Aid” workshop for members of congress and their staff in Washington, D.C. The comprehensive, four-hour session taught participants the warning signs of mental illness and gave them an overview of what those suffering from mental illness experience and how they can be helped.

Rep. Stark: “Education is the best weapon against stigma. One of the reasons mental health

disorders can be so challenging to handle is because the illness often prevents the person from understanding they need help. I know from dealing with situations in my own office how upsetting it can be, for my staff and my constituents both, when we don't understand what someone needs or how we can help. Knowing how to recognize the signs of mental illness and how best to respond are critical to helping us provide the kind of service our constituents deserve."

Rep. Napolitano: "Mental health is the issue we do not see, we do not hear, and we do not talk about, because of the stigma. We often ignore it politically, and even personally sometimes. This attitude needs to change. Mental health is critical for our economy, the welfare of our soldiers and family members, and the future of our country."

The information was presented by the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. Linda Rosenberg, President and CEO, and Bryan Gibb, Director of Public Education, explained how to recognize the most common mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and psychosis, and how to direct those that need help to care if those issues are detected.

"People may know CPR or the Heimlich Maneuver, but the truth is they are more likely to come across someone in an emotional crisis than someone having a heart attack. Mental Health First Aid emphasizes that mental illnesses are real, common, and treatable, and that help is available," Rosenberg said.

Background:

- May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, a time when groups across the country hold rallies and events to draw attention to mental health. Today's workshop was the third event held by the Mental Health Caucus this month, in addition to a briefing on mental health issues for veterans and their families, and a tour of the National Naval Medical Center's traumatic brain injury unit.
- One out of four Americans suffers from a mental health issue (2005 Harvard Study)
- State mental health programs were cut nationally by 4 percent in 2009, 5 percent in 2010, and are estimated to be cut by more than 8% in 2011 (Stateline.org July 19 2010)
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24 (National Institute of Mental Health report)
- More than 90 percent of people who die from suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder, commonly a depressive disorder or a substance-abuse disorder (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention)
- 70% of adolescents with mental health problems do not receive care (Journal of Adolescent Health, volume 38)
- Mental disorders cost the U.S. economy \$193 billion in lost earnings each year (American Journal of Psychiatry, May 2008)

#